

THE CURIOSITY

Saturday, December 12, 1868.



"He had sunk in a swoon upon the bridge."—p. 146.

ESTHER WEST.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "PEGGY OGLIVIE'S INHERITANCE."

CHAPTER XX.—STRUCK DOWN.

WHEN Martin Potter left his home and walked out into the streets on that sunny Sabbath morning, he hardly knew whither he was going. He seemed to be as one walking on burning ploughshares; and, as one, by a stretch of imagination, may be supposed to do in such a case, he almost ran, quickening the agony as if to get it over. When he reached

the bridge, making for the waste places of Battersea

Fields, he stood still for a little and looked over the parapet upon the river. The light breeze which swept over it gave him a moment's ease. He took off his hat, and allowed it to play on his burning forehead. Through all the pain, not only his senses, but his intellect, seemed exalted into a keenness which of itself was torture. The struggle of his life was intensified for him—the hitherto vain struggle to rise. He clenched his teeth, and muttered through them, "And even yet I will win or die! I can't play the beast."

And now the very breeze that had cooled at first seemed to burn, and he turned away and crossed the bridge with a sensation that it was sinking under him. On the other side, after wandering aimlessly up and down, he at length seated himself on the river bank. Then a strange feeling came over him that he was really in darkness—in darkness in the broad sunshine—he and the whole universe. He knew he was sitting in the sun, but the river ran before him black as ink. He looked up into the sky: it was clear, cloudless, but black—black as night. The boats as they flashed or glided past were black—black as death. He could endure it no longer. He rose and took his way back to the bridge. There he stood again leaning over, till the horrible sinking came upon him again. Down, down he went; the inky heaven closed over him, the inky river awaited him; now he floated away upon it. He had sunk in a swoon upon the bridge.

First, one or two children gathered, gazing, awestruck; then some men and women passed on the other side, saying, "Oh, never mind; he's drunk." Then a rough stirred him with his foot, and said, "You'd better get up out o' that, or bobby'll be at you."

Martin Potter's hat was crushed over his eyes, so that no one could see his face; and when the policeman did come, he fell upon the same charitable supposition as the other passers-by. With a more peremptory action of his foot, not unlike a kick, indeed, he told him to get up. But the man could neither obey nor feel; whereupon the policeman made up his mind to take him off to the station, and looked round for help.

And in the station Martin Potter might have raved out the night, but for Philip's returning feet. Here was a human being cast by the wayside; that was enough for him, as it was for his Master when he walked in Galilee.

"Dead drunk," muttered the representative of the law, as Philip stopped before the prostrate man.

"All the more need to see after him," thought Philip; and stooping down, he raised his hat and saw his neighbour Martin Potter.

"You know him?" said the policeman, as Philip uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"Yes, I know him," answered the latter, frankly, "and I never yet saw him drunk. He is ill: he has fainted."

"He don't look much like a sick man," said the policeman; but Philip had quickly removed him out of his crouching position by the wall of the bridge, and laid him down flat on his back; then running to the river, which was then at full tide, he drenched his cotton handkerchief in it, and returning, laid it on Martin Potter's forehead. In a few minutes Potter's chest began to heave and struggle, and at length with a groan he came to himself, and looked up in Philip's face.

"You are ill," said the latter, gently.

"I chose to make a beast of myself last night," replied Martin Potter, struggling to raise himself, and looking rather resentfully at Philip; "that's all."

The policeman walked away, content to leave the recovering man in Philip's hands, also content in having his judgment of the case verified to some extent.

"Let me help you," said Philip, lingering, for there was more than a last night's fit of intemperance in the haggard face beside him.

Potter rose, and was about to refuse the offered help, but, as he rose, he felt his limbs bend beneath his weight, and he clutched almost fiercely at Philip's arm.

"It's hard that a man like me can't get drunk for once in his life without suffering like this for it. I know fellows who can do it any day of their lives, and be none the worse for it."

"That seems the harder to me," answered his companion; "but there's more the matter with you than that, it seems to me. Have you ever had the fever?"

Philip meant the typhus fever, the deadly scourge which lays the strong man low.

"I never was sick in my life," said Potter. "You don't think I've got the fever?" he added, quick apprehension in his voice.

"Tell me how you feel," said Philip; "I've been through it myself."

Martin Potter described the sensations he had experienced, and Philip shook his head.

"I fear you are in for it," he replied. "You must go to bed as soon as you get home, and call in the doctor. It's no use fighting against it when it has hold of you. It's best to give in at once."

"I'll never give in," answered the unhappy man, looking at his companion with eyes in which there was delirium to be read.

Philip's mouth quivered like a woman's as he turned away his head, saying to himself, "Poor fellow, I hope he will pull through."

It was all that Philip could do to get Martin Potter safely to his own home. With Philip's help he was put to bed, and a neighbouring practitioner called in, who declared that the patient had a violent attack of fever upon him. Philip had remained till the doctor came, and he now offered to share with Mary the task of nursing her husband. This, however, she declined, and Philip rose to go. "It may want a man's

strength to keep him quiet in the night," he said, as he took his leave, "but you can call me at any hour."

"Thank you, thank you," said Mary, clasping his hand. Then he bowed a little awkwardly to Esther, kissed little Mary, who seemed to expect it, and went away.

Not for a moment, on that day, did Mary quit her husband's pillow. Esther—for it was she who took her vacant place in the household—kept all quiet without, and within the darkened room the wife kept watch, feeling that there lay all life for her.

Esther did not find her post quite a sinecure; but her very strangeness served to check the more rebellious of her subjects. Then the elder lads, who had stood aloof, seeing the sweetness and patience which she brought to bear upon the troublesome Johnny, came to her help, and carried him off after dinner, for a long afternoon in the park. They were old enough to understand the extent of the calamity that had fallen upon the house, and to become very grave under its shadow. Sarah drudged on noiselessly, sometimes creeping up-stairs, and sitting hot and wearied on the steps opposite to the room where her father lay, till she heard a murmur from within, and then venturing to peep in and ask, by telegraphic signs, if her mother wanted anything. The twins, as usual, lived their life apart, though sharing in the general concern. They went out again in the afternoon; but Esther noticed that the blue streamers were suppressed for the present.

She could hardly believe her senses as she felt herself moving in the midst of this strange new life—so real, so vivid, so full of palpitating anxiety. All her past life seemed as a dream to her. The reality of living was with the suffering present, not with that easy, enjoying past. The hot afternoon passed over; tea-time came, and all the family had gathered again to what was their evening meal, when Sarah, who had taken up some tea to her mother, asked Esther to go up and speak to her. She left the room at once, and her going was the signal for a breaking out of repressed spirits. "Doesn't she give us lots of butter!" said Bob, with his mouth quite full, while Master Johnny's fist made for the sugar-basin.

"If she don't look out there'll be nothing left for to-morrow," said Walter.

"Bob, you're a greedy fellow," said Martin. "She"—indicating Esther—"doesn't know the ways of the house, and you're taking advantage." So they went on wrangling.

Mary, meantime, was consulting Esther as to the best way of keeping her little scholars from assembling on Monday, and Esther undertook to write about a dozen notes, and send the boys round with them, as the children were living in the neighbourhood. Writing materials were procured, and the notes, stating that owing to serious illness in the family, Mrs. Potter's "classes for young ladies" must be discontinued for the present, were dispatched.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE BROKEN LADDER.

BEFORE the evening closed the doctor came again, but only to find his patient worse, as indeed he had expected. "The fever has been hanging about him for some time," he said to Mary; "but he has fought it off till now."

Had he been complaining of illness during the past week?

No, there had been no complaint; but Mary had no doubt in her own mind that he had suffered without complaining, and the suffering accounted for his increased irritability and gloom. It might account also for the intoxication of the previous night. He had probably gone on drinking, in the hope of throwing off the depression of the illness with which he was struggling.

Thus Mary strove with all her gentle wisdom to excuse her husband to herself. Might not the same cause have led to his conduct with regard to Esther? Mary could not shut her eyes to the wrong inflicted on her daughter, to all outward appearance at least. "Things are so different here to what you have been accustomed to," said she, almost ashamed that she should see the shifts to which they were put in arranging the accommodation for the night. This she did on the landing beside the door within which she kept her watch, resisting all entreaties that she herself should rest while she provided for the others. "He never would have brought you here if he had been quite himself," she added, in a lower tone. "He has been suffering all the past week; and listen, he is quite delirious now."

Mary paused, and they stood and listened to the murmurs which came from within the room. They grew louder and more distinct. He fancied himself bearing a heavy load and mounting a ladder. "Hold fast! Steady it!—steady it!" he called, in a voice suppressed with anxiety. "There! I knew it was rotten; I knew it would not bear the weight. What a gap is left! I can't get over it! I tell you I can't—I'm done for! Oh, God! my head!"

"If you only knew," said Mary, weeping, "how hard he has fought to get up the ladder, and how bitterly he has failed. You cannot know how bitter failure is to a man like him. He was so eager, so strong, so steady, and, but for the failure, he would have been so good. If he had but succeeded he would have been so different." She looked at Esther through her tears, as if appealing for belief, appealing doubtfully, too, and she saw on the girl's face a keener anguish of sympathy than her own. "I wish you had never come here," she whispered.

"No, you must not wish that," replied Esther, taking her mother's hand in both of hers. "I am glad that he—that my father—brought me here. I seem to have been asleep and dreaming, and I would rather be awake and live. I feel as if I had no right to that smooth, easy life I have left; and I

shall be so glad to help you. You will let me help, will you not?"

"Not now: you must go to bed now. To-morrow you will need your strength. Good night;" and Mary kissed her daughter and sent her away. And somehow she felt comforted—felt that she could never lose her altogether again.

And Esther was awake, keenly and terribly awake, to the pressure of the life in the midst of which she found herself. Seated once more on the bed beside her sleeping sister, she realised it keenly: the over-crowded dwelling, sunk in repose, holding so many lives, so many destinies; the possibilities of all those lives narrowed by the necessities of living, pressed upon by crushing circumstance; her father fighting with his fever; her sweet, wise mother at her patient watch—all these awakened dormant sympathies in Esther's soul, which she knew, and felt, would never sleep again, and which, full of pain and pity as they were, held at the core of them a joy and exultation—that which a poet of our day has called "the joy of eventful living."

Gifted with large and loving comprehension, the result of a clear intellect and a generous heart, a great sympathy with this struggling, working life had laid hold of her. She began to wonder if she had any right to go back to her old life; but it could never be the same—she could not live any longer for enjoyment. Here Philip and his preaching came into her mind, and raised a crowd of solemn thoughts which took shape in prayer. She fell asleep listening for his singing—fell asleep in the silence.

It was very early morning when she sought her mother's room, ready for action, and fresh and vigorous from sleep in the pure air, which visits the city by night, if people will only keep their windows open to receive the heavenly visitor. And in that household there was, indeed, need for a fresh and vigorous spirit. Mary looked ten years older in the morning light, and gladly accepted Esther's offer to make tea for her; and having received directions where to find things, Esther went into the little kitchen, and made the necessary preparations with a celerity and neatness which would have astonished Sarah, who was still asleep in her improvised bed on the parlour sofa.

It was wonderful how smoothly things went that morning. Under Sarah's directions, who had to be roused at last, Esther put her hands to all the tasks of the household. The lads went off to work, the boys to school, and the twins to what they called their house of business. The day was well begun—the day that passes whether we are hale and happy, or sick and sorrowful, and whose progress is the same whether it brings life or death.

It brought another grave trouble under Esther's notice—a trouble which overshadows and comes side by side with every other among the poor—the want

of money. Esther was not quite, perhaps, in the mental condition of the princess, who when told that the people starved for want of bread, said, "Why don't they eat cakes?" but she had never known the want of money, and, therefore, had never known its value—that it was not only food, and clothing, and shelter, but heart's ease and freedom from crushing anxieties; that it was health, and healing, and life itself.

One or two little weekly bills had been presented that morning, and their bearers had been diplomatically dismissed unpaid. The task of dismissing them had been confided to Sarah; and Sarah was rapidly becoming confidential with this sister, who was so much older and grander—"so like a lady," indeed, and yet who looked upon her—Sarah—as an authority in domestic matters."

"I told the baker that father was ill, and mother would call and pay him in a few days. He will trust us," said the girl, proudly, "for we always pay."

"But why did you not pay him?" asked Esther, innocently."

"Oh! there will be many things wanted," answered Sarah, unconsciously using her mother's words, "and we must have ready money to get them. But I don't know what is to be done if father lies long; there will be nothing then but what Willie, and Martin, and Emily, and Agnes can earn, and that won't do more than buy bread for so many."

"Please take this," said Esther, emptying her purse on the kitchen table; "I am sure mamma will give me more."

She used the familiar name unhesitatingly, and reflection did not check her trust in the source of supply which she had indicated.

Then the doctor paid his visit. "He's a strong man, and may get through it," he said, in reply to Mary's eager questioning.

Her own weariness had made her desponding, which added to the alarm always inspired by the state of unconsciousness. She was impressed with the idea of her husband's danger. But the doctor insisted on her taking rest.

"You must save your strength," he said, "for it will all be needed. His life will depend upon your care."

Then learning that Esther was a daughter of the house, he insisted that she should take her mother's place, for the next few hours at least.

Mary could not disregard the doctor's injunction. She lay down to rest.

"You must promise to wake me if he stirs; especially if he asks for me. He has not known me all the night. What if he should never know me again?"

And Esther promised, and took her mother's place in the sick-room.

Thus the day wore on. It was afternoon when a rap came to the door which startled the whole house.

It was Harry West. Esther came to him straight from the darkened room where she had kept watch for the first time beside a sick-bed—her mother, awakened by the noise, had already taken her place. He greeted her with a gaiety which jarred upon her, almost hurt her. As great a distance had been placed between them in those last three days as it sometimes takes half a lifetime to place between characters of original diversity, inevitable as that moving apart always is.

He began by railing at Mrs. Wiggett. "I would have been here on Saturday, if the old lady had favoured me with your address," he said.

"She must have known it," said Esther, quietly, "for it was she and her husband who found out all about me."

"I know that," he replied. Harry always knew everything in the shape of gossip. "And I'm determined to find out all about her. Indeed, I've found out already. I'm certain she has another husband out in Australia. Fancy that little shrew with two husbands. I should think they would hardly fight for which was to have her," and he laughed merrily, and held out his hand to little Mary, who had been standing wide-eyed and with parted lips by Esther's side.

He was quite at his ease in the little parlour, as he was everywhere else. He observed everything, but then nothing impressed him. He was not struck with its poverty, nor with Esther's gravity of demeanour. At length he asked if he could see her father. He was approaching the object of his visit, but no one could have told that the object was one of tender moment. His gaiety had nothing of tenderness in it.

But if Esther had known his purpose, she could not have been more repressive in her manners; not that this would have helped her, however, if circumstances had not been on her side. "You cannot see him," she answered; "he is lying ill."

"What's the matter?" he asked, carelessly.

"Fever."

He shrank visibly. His courage, being physical, was of the things he could fight with. He dreaded disease.

She noticed the gesture. "I have just come from his room," she said, "and he is quite insensible."

"Then you ought to come away at once," he said, "as long as he cannot hinder you. Will you return with me?"

"No; I cannot," she answered. "You forget that he is my father, and that I am bound to respect his will—all the more," she added, "that he is unable to enforce it."

He was about to urge objections, but she broke off suddenly.

"You have not told me anything about mamma? Is she ill; is she unhappy? You must tell her that I cannot come back to her, cannot even see her, till he is better."

He assured her that she was just as usual—he had not thought that she was particularly ill, or particularly unhappy: only she had expected Esther to return.

"Will you wait till I write to her?" she asked, feeling that no message delivered through Harry's medium would carry her meaning in it.

He assented, and she hastened to write, and in the meantime he went to the window and threw it more fully open, twice interrupting her to mention the best-known preventives of infection, thus showing, with his usual transparency, in what direction his mind was working.

Esther hastened to close her letter, and to send him away.

"You ought not to be longer here," she said. "Tell mamma I will write every day."

"And when he is better you will come back to us? He will be more reasonable then, perhaps."

"I will come and see mamma the hour in which I am free," she replied.

"It is such a bore," he said, holding out his hand—one of those plump, well-favoured hands that have no grip of fellowship in them—"it will spoil all our pleasure. Your friends are all lamenting over you, Miss Constance, quite disconsolate. There never was anything so hard, I should think. What a horrid place to live in, too, and everything in the country looking lovely. I say," he whispered on the threshold, "if he should die, you would be free."

She started with horror. "I would rather stay here for ever," she replied, with passion; and drawing back a step or two, she uttered a constrained and cold good-bye. (*To be continued.*)

A WORD UPON DEALING KINDLY.

BY THE REV. W. M. STATHAM.



CUTE person! Well, do you think that so very complimentary? A man, sir, that you must rise uncommonly early to get the better of, sir; a man who seems to have been nourished upon that extraordinary American beverage called an "eye-opener." A cute person!

Well, if there did happen to be coats-of-arms for cute persons, those might desire them who felt it a great compliment to be one of the cuties.

A kind person—naturally thoroughly, sincerely kind. Can any one stay to consider which is the most covetable designation—cute or kind? Say which. Why is it that a kind person is supposed

very often to be soft, and if not stupid, at all events not brilliantly bright? Is there any necessary connection between density of intellect and kindness of heart? I think not. In one of those graphic touches of history of which the Old Testament is so full—viz., in the Book of Ruth, we find Naomi, in her great sorrow, after the deaths of Elimelech her husband, and her two noble sons, Mahlon and Chilion, saying to her daughters-in-law, as she left the land of her adoption for the land of her birth, “The Lord deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and me.” Beautiful benediction that. Surely if infinite wisdom and infinite tenderness can co-exist in God, we need not deem it unlikely that a lofty intellect and a large heart can co-exist in man.

Benedictions have been common to all races and to all times. The Arab, dashing past his fellow in the dreary desert, passes by with a salutation of peace upon his lips; but no benediction of Arab or Spaniard can approach to this for exquisite pathos and beauty: “The Lord *deal kindly with you.*” How simple, and yet how suggestive! It recognises the Divine hand working, ordering, adapting, arranging; and at such a season, too—the parting season. There is a sound of sweetest music for the heart in the words. They remind us of times and seasons when familiar friendships give place to partings; when the vigilant eye, the active hand, the thoughtful heart cannot be there, and when, in consequence thereof, we are thrown back upon a more conscious need of the help and blessing of God. Beautiful words, speaking to us out of the old era of the world’s history. In how many languages have they been enshrined? Verily into more than one hundred and fifty languages or dialects; and who can tell upon how many living tablets of the human heart they have been found engraven as the wish of a mother for her child, or of a friend for the exile driven forth by persecution or trial from fatherland or home?

The benediction itself reminds us that the Being it speaks of knows best what kindness is. It is not what we sometimes think it is; God is not indulgent, nor is it right to address him as indulgent Father. To his children God is never indulgent: he is too kind for that. No word in the English language describes a feebler state of being than the word indulgent; it refers always to the weaker side of our nature. True, indeed, it is that there are multitudes who confound kindness with indulgence. Some think of a kind parent as of one in whom law is sacrificed to whim. Perhaps we have all had our empty notions in time past of both Divine government and human government, as though in both it were best to be sometimes indifferent to the stricter conditions of law. But wider observation shows us how mis-

taken this notion is; and as experience broadens, we learn that kindness is to be judged of in regard to the ultimate end. When souls are trained, whether by the stern discipline of Egypt or the long trial of the desert, it is that in Palestine there may be a race fitted for the rule and enjoyment of a land so beautiful. Thus, too, there is a kindness in the discipline which meets us to enter any kingdom. The hard soil, full of loose, nobly stones, on the highway to knowledge, leads to a glorious end; and the Saviour himself has told us, tribulation is kind; for only through much tribulation can we enter the kingdom of heaven.

We have only to look for a moment to the other aspect of kindness, and we shall see how much misery is wrought through the *cruel mercies* of the wicked. Multitudes are ruined by a seeming kindness. The servant, who thinks that her mistress is strict and her life too regulative, is often led away by the saponaceous mannerism of some worthless scoundrel who talks glib kindnesses, and professes to pity her hard bondage to duty. The child who becomes possessed with the notion that his parents are too restrictive, soon finds in the cold world without that there are plenty of people engaged in their own schemes of success, but few enough to counsel and take care of him. Yes, we are not always the best judges of what kindness is, but our Father in heaven is wise enough to know the wants of each of his children: how beautiful, therefore, the benediction, “The Lord deal kindly with you.”

The salutation suggests also to us that God has shown the world what kindness means. “Deal kindly.” That expresses thought, care, wisdom, pity, forbearance, love. All these we see in their outworking in human history. God’s kindness is not, indeed, contingent upon our conduct; he is kind to the unthankful and the evil. The whole system of things around and about us is a spectacle of kind forethought and adaptation. That old design-argument in relation to creation, so almost effete in the modern evidences, but true enough, and elucidated so fully, years ago, in the Bridgewater Treatises, is capable of almost boundless application. No one can look at the constitution of any living thing, without marking kind forethought for its wants, and kind arrangement for its own little sphere of existence. But in human history that kindness is most apparent. Why so arrange as to give forth even of *Himself*, and make man in His own image, but that God might bestow something of his own beatific glory on the creation; and why, after the wilfulness and wickedness of sin, offer to pardon and re-create man anew in Christ, but from a kindness which no enmity can kill?

This salutation, however, has a specialty in it: it reminds us that there must be seasons when

our thought for others will be, and ought to be, tenderly solicitous. Naomi is about to return to the land of her fathers, and her sons' wives were to be left behind; this was not so, of course, with Ruth, but such was the mother-in-law's design. There was, very naturally, an overflow of natural sentiment on either side when she kissed them, and they lifted up their voice and wept. There must be in human life seasons of separation. I think God has set the order of nature itself on such a plan as to give us constant prophecies of the last great separation. If a family grew up till death, all embosomed in the same sweet village, or the one parental home, how awful would be the departure of each, as one by one they disappeared for the final bourne! but when some are abroad in the Indian service, some in the country, some in the city, some tending their own new households, and others occupied in the stern duties of life, how softened are the sadnesses of the separation which must one day come.

Such separating seasons are in themselves wise and kind. Yea, even as we gaze on the picture of "Eastward Ho!" in the Academy, where the mother is parting with her open-faced sailor-boy; we feel it is all well, and all kind, even though there be tears and trial now.

And surely, if any words come to the lips at seasons such as these, which have a special relevancy to our state of heart, we find them here. "The Lord deal kindly with you;" yes, the same Lord, who is "rich in mercy to all those that call upon him," in whatever land over which the blue skies bend it may be their lot to be cast. I sometimes think that the sun, the moon, and the stars are types in the sky of the God who made them; they can be seen and known in every land. Yes, let hearts separated by the Atlantic or Pacific ponder this, that, as their eyes can look up, and so meet in one star, so their hearts can be lifted up and meet in the same God. Separations, I have said, must come. Even so! Here and there in this brief voyage of life the Great Packet Ship lets down her passengers into the boats, which touch now upon a village, now upon a hamlet or a town, and the moment comes when we bend over the side with a helping hand and a loving glance, and as we wave handkerchiefs to the little skiff, getting speck-like on the waves, we breathe the prayer, "The Lord deal kindly with you."

This benediction reminds us, however, that our own conduct to others is often used as a plea in prayer. "As ye have dealt with the dead and me." A memorable appendix that! Memory is sometimes the source of sorrow, sometimes of joy,

like the air, laden now with frankincense and now with fetid smells. We can see Naomi as she speaks those words to the fair and beautiful widows of her dead sons. They had been as daughters to her, and specially did she remember what they had been to her beloved Elimelech, helping by their industries, and cheering home by their bright smiles and kind hearts. "The dead and me." What a link! Unbroken even by death, still speaking of them as part of herself. And is not this how we all feel, when we meet one who was constantly taking flowers to our little sick sister's bedroom, or helpful in the hour of a past sorrow and trial with kindest sympathies? Do we ever forget it when our dear companions, who fought and struggled with us in life's battle-field, have fallen asleep? Never! no, never! It is still "the dead and me." Never let us think that kindness to the dead is forgotten by the living. No! that must be a cold and callous heart indeed where such a memory can be obliterated. Let us remember in this little life of ours how vain and foolish a thing it is to preserve in our hearts any memories of wrong, or discord, or division; let us bury them out of our mental sight. Who amongst us would like to think of unkindness to the dead? and even while we read they may be gone.

Kindness is the precious oil which runs down the beard even to the sandals. Kindness is the ointment which can heal many heart-wounds, and is contained in the alabaster box of every heart. Remember, we may be clever and kind, and that it is a foolish and wicked perversion of language which associates kindness of heart with a pulpy sort of condition of brain. Moreover, the dealing kindly is just what the world wants now as ever. It is a patent vulcanizer, which will send on the great machine of labour without hurting the wheels or tearing up the roads; it is not expensive or difficult to work. The heart can "go on at it" for any length of time without being the worse for wear, or the poorer in itself.

It is, indeed, a delicate and beautiful employ. It consists, not merely in polite phrases, or the patronage of a pretentious and ostentatious sort, the "doing something for you." It is soft and subtle as the bracing Highland air; it is wise and reverent, respecting even prejudices as well as principles. It trespasses on none of the self-respecting feelings of womanhood or manhood. Like the light—it is—and that is all you know. And surely we need no higher injunction to the exercise of a spirit so divine and beautiful than the sacred one—"Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

THE POLICEMAN'S PROTÉGÉ.

BY CLEMENT W. SCOTT.

SWANTED to surprise my wife, so I carried my parcel stealthily into the house and deposited it unconcernedly on the sideboard in our little parlour. I should have known my wife better than to have doubted her feminine acuteness.

"Why, whatever have you got there, Charles? No more toys for the little ones, I hope. I won't allow you to waste the money like that, you affectionate old fellow."

"No, old lady; no more toys for Nicksy."

"What's in the parcel then?"

"I don't know."

Here my wife looked at me incredulously. The idea of my having walked home two miles from the police-station with a parcel under my arm, of the contents of which I was ignorant, seemed to her feminine imagination such an utter impossibility, that she expressed, as politely as she could, with her uncommonly expressive countenance, that I was having a bit of fun with her.

"Don't know what's in the parcel! then for goodness' sake, Charles, why don't you open it. You call yourself a policeman, and trying hard to be a detective!—why, it may be something dreadful."

"Don't feel very suspicious, at any rate," said I; "but you know as well as I do why I didn't cut the string."

"Why?"

"Because—because I wanted us to do it together."

Here my wife kissed me, and that's what I hoped for. We didn't cut the string, because a peculiar hobby of my father's had descended as an heirloom to his son. I believe my father would sooner have given me money for three balls of twine than allowed me to cut a bit to waste. He kept all the stray scraps under the cushion of his old arm-chair, and when any of us wanted string we always knew where to find it.

The nimble fingers of my wife soon undid the knots, and then came perplexing wrappings of paper, fold upon fold. I believe that shopmen take delight in wrapping up a parcel. The more paper the greater the excitement. At last came the last folding of silver tissue, and then we both saw something glitter.

"It's gold!" said my wife, in the energetic tone of an excited Australian digger.

It was gold, but not a nugget. Before us on the table stood a very handsome clock, inlaid with Roman mosaic, and beneath the clock was a silver plate, with the following inscription written on it in scarlet enamel: "Presented to Charles Dyson,

the policeman who was the means of rescuing a beggar-boy from despair. 'The poor ye have always with you, but me ye have not always.'"

"And what's the meaning of all this, Charles Dyson?" said my wife. "You're the policeman, of course, but who is the beggar-boy? Tell me all about it, my husband, for I am dying to know."

"Molly, it must be a mistake. I can't understand it at all."

"A mistake! nonsense. Your name's Charles Dyson, and of course the clock belongs to you. But, ah! here's a letter."

Sure enough, there was a letter hidden among the paper coverings, but as the letter may not prove very interesting, and certainly was far too eulogistic, I will travel back some years from the night we unpacked the parcel, and relate, just as I related to my wife, the story of the beggar-boy.

"It was one of these terrible hard nights in winter, when men naturally thank God as they walk through the streets for the blessing of a comfortable home and a warm fire to go to when work is over, that I noticed a little urchin crying his heart out, at the end of a dark alley in the neighbourhood of Leicester Square. Now, I hate to hear children cry. For the matter of that, I hate to think and know—for all policemen know it—that young children cry and die of hunger and cold, day after day, while we hulking great fellows eat mutton and beef, and have our stomachs warmed with cups of soothing coffee and tea. I am not a fool, or I shouldn't be a policeman; and I am not so dull that I can't see that many of these crying children are the instruments of cheats and impostors. They get paid well, no doubt, for their job, and, perhaps—I dare say this is not improbable—those who make use of these poor children to lie and deceive charitable people, will some day suffer for their share in the transaction. Policemen are duped like the most of us, and it is little wonder, perhaps, that men in our line get callous and hard-hearted from being taken in every now and then, when they were stretching a point very likely on the side of charity.

"I have been deceived over and over again, and often and often I have given some miserable little urchin a penny when I could ill spare it, for the sake of his dying mother, or his consumptive sister, or to get a bit of bread or what not, and found my weeping friend a few minutes afterwards spending my hard-earned wages in a lollipop-shop, or still worse, in a public-house.



"I touched the boy on the shoulder, and asked him what was the matter."—p. 154.

"Still, who am I, to judge? Over and over again we have had this discussion among our men, and over and over again I have maintained that I prefer losing the dozen halfpence or so, given in this way, to missing the one chance of doing a charitable action.

"Anyhow, there was the little fellow crying as if his heart would break, alone, and up a blind alley. A blind alley, remember; and this, in my humble estimation, was a great point in the boy's favour. If his crying-fit were unreal and assumed, he would certainly not indulge in it at the top of a blind alley, dull and unfrequented, certainly not visited by the kind of charitable folks who relieve crying children on doorsteps and in public thoroughfares. I touched the boy on the shoulder, and asked him what was the matter.

"He had no trumped-up story ready on his lips. He gave one look at me, and then, covering his face with his hands, he sobbed again.

"He was not afraid of me, as most street-boys are. They look upon policemen as their natural enemies, knowing that policemen are aware of all their clevernesses and tricks.

"This poor little fellow turned away because he was ashamed.

"His story—when I could get him to speak—was a very simple one. He was an errand-boy in a stationer's shop in Piccadilly, and with his small earnings contrived to swell the income of his widowed mother, who had to fill several little mouths.

"Going home with his week's wages, he had been robbed by a designing woman, who had cajoled the little fellow into showing his money, and having seen it, had snatched it out of his hand.

"Would he know the woman again, if he saw her? I asked.

"He thought he would. I knew very well where to find the woman. We did find her, and where I expected—at the bar of a public-house; but the boy's money had been passed on or hidden away long before I encountered her.

"It would have been a mere waste of time to have taken up the woman. I studied her features thoroughly, and let her go. I shall never forget her face—but that is a policeman's duty.

"And now what was I to do with the boy? I thoroughly believed his story, and believing it, I quite understood the feeling which made him dread returning home penniless. The little family at home expected the money—they needed it urgently. This tiny bread-winner was in no dread of the cane, or of coarse abuse for his carelessness. His punishment would be bitterer still. His mother, his brother, and sister would be starving.

For himself, he cared nothing, and as I tell you, I believed what he said.

"I took my little friend to the police-station, and at once instituted what is only too common amongst policemen—a whip round.

"I was very successful that night. Most of the men at the station had been on a very popular duty, which had resulted in little presents for services specially rendered. They had had a good day, and were inclined to be charitable. We made up the amount of the lost wages and a little over, and then I started off with the boy to test the accuracy of his statement. I always made a point of doing this when I possibly could, in order to satisfy myself, and prove to those who assisted me that they had not given their money for nothing. The story was only too true. It was all the more sad, because the widowed mother was one of those most unfortunate of all women—one 'who has seen better days.' By her look and manner I fancied she must have been a lady: but that was not my business. There she was, poor thing, very humble and very distressed. If her misery was of her own making, she had repented of her fault in the saddest manner possible.

"I think she must have kissed my coat when I brought her back her boy. I know that when her boy told her of what, in my simple way, I had done, she wrung and kissed my hand, and would not let it go.

"Somehow or other, Molly, the boy interested me, and when I went away from the house, and was all alone, I kept puzzling my brains thinking what I could do for him.

"I liked him, because he supported his mother and family, and I knew he was one of the right sort, because his mother and all the rest of them loved him so passionately.

"This was some time before I married you, my good wife, and having no courting to occupy my spare hours, and nothing particular to do, I used to amuse myself with hunting up little vagrants, sifting the wheat from the tares, as it were, and helping to put those who had fallen on their legs again. This kind of work was a hobby of mine. But mind you, I didn't work alone. If it hadn't been for Mr. Prendergast, the jolly parson, as you call him, I should never have been able to do anything. You know how I like Mr. Prendergast. He has no humbug about him. He can preach as good a sermon, and hit as smart a sixer to leg at cricket, as most men. He does his duty, and does it smiling. He believes every one until they tell him lies; and if he catches a fellow lying, woe betide him. He's our chaplain to the force, and we all like him. I sometimes wish—perhaps it is silly—that Mr. Prendergast would get mauled by the roughs in the execution of his duty. Only

let the X division hear of it, and get the command to go down the most disreputable alley in London, wouldn't our men fight for him, that's all! And I think my Molly has a sneaking affection for the happy parson!

"He married us, didn't he, old lady? and he christened Nicksy, so he will always be one of the family, like.

"But to return to the little boy who I set upon his legs again. Chance threw it into my way to give the youngster a good turn.

"At that time I used to save my lodgings by keeping the houses of rich gentlefolks, when they were out of town. It makes the minds of the owners easy, and certainly suits the pockets of policemen.

"Burglars and sneaks, and fellows of that kidney, have a wholesome horror of a house into which a policeman can enter at all hours; and so they keep off and we keep in.

"Well, I was keeping the house of a fanciful old lady with an innate horror of burglars, a strange respect for policemen, and an undying love for cats, dogs, and parrots. She had a large house in the country, and a fashionable mansion at Brighton—the only place she liked in the world—and I never could quite make out why she kept up an establishment in London at all. However, that was not my business. The longer the old lady remained away from Cavendish Square, the longer I got my lodgings for nothing, and a very pretty consideration into the bargain.

"Just about the time to which I am alluding, I heard from the lady's maid, who was constantly up in town, on errands for her mistress, that the kind old lady was in want of an assistant of the male sex—half footman, half butler, half page—a kind of Jack-of-all-trades, with a civil tongue in his head, a respectable countenance, a kindly heart, and a willing temper.

"The thought struck me at once that my little friend would do. I told Pincot, the lady's maid, all about him, and we agreed to sally out together, and find out what was to be done.

"Pincot took to the boy at once, and was so far friends with the mother, that they kissed one another, women like, and cried before parting. Pincot was determined to strike while the iron was hot, and we both agreed it would be a good plan if she would take him down to Brighton that night, and happily catch her old mistress in a good

temper. The stratagem was eminently successful, and as my little friend had the good luck to save the old lady's wheeziest spaniel from drowning, off the Chain Pier, the first night he was at Brighton, it may easily be guessed that he was very soon in his mistress's good books.

"After that I never saw much of him. I got married, and my connection with the family came to an end. The last I heard about him was that he was the old lady's constant attendant everywhere, wheeling her out, reading to her, and a slave to her every wish.

"The other day I happened to be on duty in Rotten Row, and among the horsemen I saw a face I had certainly seen before. I followed it. The face was changed, certainly, but it was quite familiar to me.

"I watched the face intently, and, at last, the young man seeing that my eyes were upon him, and seeming at the same time to recognise me, rode across to where I was standing.

"I was right, I had seen the face before. It was my little friend of the blind alley. The mystery was soon cleared up. The old lady, his mistress—I told you she was an eccentric old woman—had just died. She left no children, and all her relatives were dead. When her will was opened, it was discovered that she had left the bulk of her property to my little friend, with a handsome annuity to Pincot the maid.

"These kind of things do happen sometimes, and I am only glad that the money has fallen into such good hands. The humble family is now re-united, and are far above any chance of want any more. But you can't think, Molly, how delighted the young man was to see me again. He looks quite the gentleman in his new clothes, and he is coming to call upon us to-morrow, and is determined to drive you and all the little ones down to Hampton Court.

"Meanwhile look at the clock. I know very well who sent it, Molly, and so do you by this time. Poor boy! I happened to do him a good turn once, and I have never repented it, least of all now all has turned out as it has. And as to him, as certain as I stand here, I know he speaks from his heart when he says that he will never forget what I did for him one miserable winter's night. But what do you think he calls himself, Molly? He is a fine gentleman now, and uses, oh! such grand words. Why he calls himself—I dare say you will understand it—*the Policeman's Protégé*."

"BEFORE THE LORD."

AT early morn, of Jephtha's vow
The holy page all graphic told ;
And o'er it many an earnest brow
Was bent, to watch its lines unfold :

And looking up, new thought to seize,
Mine eye fell on the burial-sod ;—
Through the school-lattice waved the trees,
And sunlight touched the house of God :

The while faith's grandeur, brave and calm
With love's devotion, round us stole :
And deep desire flowed, like a psalm,
That God would plant them in the soul ;

That we might muse upon the Cross,
As the meek maid on humbler boon ;
And count life's cherished hopes but loss,
For His dear sake who cometh soon.

Anon I heard another vow
Thrice spoken, and with deep accord :
And words of awful import now
Were "uttered before the Lord."

For, reverent, at the chaneel-rails
Young pastors knelt, and prayer was made
To Him whose grace for us prevails,
And hands of blessing on them laid,

In symbol of that shadowing Hand
That led them to His harvest-field,
Or to the fight in heathen land ;
And gave the sword He bade them wield.

Oh, who hath heard the words we said ?
Who listened to our thoughts to-day,
And knew the trembling hope and dread
We must have felt as well as they ?

Evn He who knows the gathering storm—
The thorny, yet the glorious track !
But from their vow, while life-blood warm
Those hearts, no spell shall lure them back.

For He was Victor in their fight,
Whose red-cross banner they unfold.
True hearts are strengthened with His might,
Like Jephtha in the days of old.

A. BOND.

CHARITIES.

BY FRANCIS W. ROWSELL, BARRISTER-AT-LAW.

II.—MODERN CHARITIES.

FWE turn to any of the London papers at any season, but especially at the winter season, we cannot fail to mark the number of charitable institutions on account of which appeals are made to the public. Hospitals, asylums, refuges, schools, soup kitchens, dispensaries, and special objects of distress. Turning to another part of the paper, we shall see the long subscription lists, which are the answers to these appeals. The aggregate is a princely sum, the manifestation of that true charity which seeketh not its own, but is anxious to extend both its hands to the sick and suffering in helpful acts of lovingkindness and mercy. No matter what the circumstances may be, no matter how greatly the poor and needy for whom assistance is asked may have contributed to their own necessity, let the need but present itself, and there will never be found on the part of the public any hanging back from the good work.

We have only to look back at the history of a very few years in order to find the most complete warrant for what we have said. In 1847 there was a famine in Ireland, and the nation, in addition to what help the Government afforded, sent liberal donations to be distributed in accordance with the

broadest spirit of charity, without respect of creed, or sect, or province. In 1854 there was a costly war with Russia, and the nation being pitiful of the widows and orphans of those who fell in her battles, raised a mighty subscription for their relief, and called it the Patriotic Fund. In 1857 there was need for the sufferers by mutiny in India, and the Indian Mutiny Fund was subscribed by those who loved Him who loved the fatherless and widows. There was the Lancashire distress which called aloud for relief, and prompt was the voice which responded to it. And there is the ever-existing distress in London, which is being largely relieved by the generous efforts of charitable men acting in the spirit of love. Has there been a colliery accident, a life-killing shipwreck, a destructive hurricane, loss by evil men's deeds, a Clerkenwell explosion, any form of suffering which calls for sympathy and active benevolence, the public has never been behindhand, but has come readily forward, and given of its time and its substance for the benefit of the poor.

Whence springs this bounty—from the head or the heart ? How much of it is cool, calculated beneficence, weighing nicely in a mental balance the reasons for and against its action, the objects of its bounty meanwhile slipping away from its grasp either by one of the many forms of death,

or by removal through other means of the causes which made that bounty desirable?

To an emotion of affectionate pity which proceeded out of the heart of William Marsden, assisted by the thoughtful, labour-loving brain of the same good man, we owe the existence of the Royal Free Hospital in Gray's Inn Road. Passing down Holborn one night, in the winter of 1827, William Marsden, who was then but lately established as a medical man in the neighbourhood, saw on the steps of St. Andrew's Church "a slight girl, lily pale." The girl was not more than eighteen years of age. She was alone in the great throng of London, friendless, starving, and sick unto death. As William Marsden came up, she breathed her last, on the cold flagstones of St. Andrew's Church. The heart of the doctor bled for pity at the exceedingly pitiful sight, and he felt urged by an irresistible impulse that shook his whole heart to do all that in him lay to prevent a repetition of it. His wise head, on being called into counsel, told him that at no hospital in London could a sufferer from illness find relief and entertainment without a letter of recommendation from some "governor" or "patron;" that the stranger, and the friendless, and the ignorant in hospital ways, were liable to die in the streets, just as this poor girl had done, because their manifest illness was not guaranteed by some one who was probably quite incapable of passing an opinion upon their case. Then the doctor's heart, brimfull of such pity as Christ would have loved, determined that henceforth this thing should not be; that the fact of being ill should constitute the sole title to be relieved, and that all comers should be admitted, provided there was room. Hence the Royal Free Hospital.

It is the peculiar characteristic of modern charity that it is set in motion, not for the purpose of immortalising its own name, but with a single eye to benefiting the objects of its regard. Among the most useful institutions of modern times are the dispensaries, of which there are many, and yet far too few, in this great city. Only those who have had occasion to use them know the value of these institutions—the enormous blessing it is to the sick poor to get good medical advice and good medicine for nothing—can rightly estimate their worth. As a general rule they are conducted on this principle: a number of persons subscribe towards the foundation and annual expenses of a medical man's establishment, in connection with which is a chemist's shop, also maintained at the subscribers' charge. There is an efficient medical practitioner resident at the dispensary, and a physician who attends on certain specified days to see to cases of a serious kind. In some cases there is also a medical man attached to the institution who undertakes to visit the sick poor at their

own homes. It is to be regretted that dispensaries are not so endowed as to be open to all comers, like the Royal Free Hospital; as it is, they are open only to those who are sent with a ticket or letter from a subscriber. They are a sort of medical benefit club for the poor of a district, the poor getting the benefit, and the better-off paying the cost; but he would be hard man who would refuse a ticket to any one, whether of the district or not, who applied to him; so that in effect dispensaries may be said to be open to all comers. There are some thirty-five dispensaries in London and its suburbs, all of them being of modern growth, doing great good to all who are brought within their reach, though all too few, as we have stated, for the common necessity. They are, moreover, very unequally distributed, some of the poorest districts being without any, while others, again, are enormously over-worked, having to receive the sick from eight, or even ten, large and densely-populated parishes.

It is a question well worthy of attention at the hands of the State, or at least of the local governments, whether dispensaries should not be as regular institutions in every parish as the national schools or the workhouse, and we commend it to the notice of our readers whether there could be any private charitable association with higher aims, or holier purpose, than one which would supply the poor everywhere, and in every district, with medicine, and the advice how to apply it, without money and without price. And in connection with this subject let us note how small is the cost of one of these blessings.

It appears from the report of the City Dispensary, one of the best and most beneficent of the kind, that in the year 1866 there were relieved by the society's officers in Queen Street, Cheapside, no less than 12,610 patients, including 3,000 visited at their own homes, and 3,628 treated for choleraic diseases. The cost of doing this vast amount of good was something under £600, including £200 for salaries and the expense of collecting subscriptions. Less than £300 purchased all the drugs and medical necessities required, so that the patients were treated, and carefully treated too, at a cost of about sixpence each. Of course, there is much assistance, medical assistance especially, which is given gratuitously to dispensaries, and it may be that they are not charged the full price for the drugs they want, but even supposing something more had to be paid on this account in the event of dispensaries becoming universal and less dependent on voluntary offerings, it would still be that an enormous amount of relief could be given to the most pitiable forms of distress for an amount which is not to be considered in comparison with it.

From dispensaries, the transition to hospitals is natural and obvious. Guy's Hospital, one of the

first of the modern hospitals, was built in 1724, with money left for the purpose by Thomas Guy, the son of a Thames lighterman. Guy was left an orphan when he was eight years old, and when he was sixteen he was apprenticed to a bookseller in Cheapside. In 1668 he set up for himself in a small place at the corner of Cornhill and Lombard Street. There he sold, at a good profit, Bibles printed in Holland, and afterwards in London, with Dutch types, first entering into competition with the king's printer, who had a monopoly, and then selling by arrangement with that worthy. Guy grew rich by his business, and then the South-Sea scheme being in the ascendant, in 1720 he bought shares in the company, and sold them again, as the South-Sea furore rose, at a profit of 400 and 500 per cent. Out of this fortune he bought the land for an hospital, which still bears his name, and which he endowed with £220,000. Before this, St. Thomas's and St. Bartholomew's—the latter is almost coeval with English history—were the only great hospitals in London, but after Thomas Guy's magnificent bequest to the sick and needy, other men followed the example, and the Westminster Hospital (built on the ground once occupied by the Sanctuary), the Middlesex, St. George's, the London Hospital, the Lock, the Magdalen, and several more rose in quick succession.

The Foundling Hospital was established in 1739, by Captain Coram, of the merchant service, for the better care and protection of deserted children, of whom many in his day were left about the streets, or at the door-step of those whom the wretched

mothers supposed would have pity upon the poor children. The mortality among infants was shockingly high, and it seemed as if no amount of exhortation, no amount of shame, would check the tendency of certain fathers and mothers to desert their offspring. Captain Coram having a pitiful heart, built his house of refuge in Guilford Street, where it now stands.

Christ's Hospital was founded by Edward VI., for the education and maintenance of orphans, and of the sons of parents with limited means. Bethlehem Hospital, also founded by Edward VI., was for the reception of the lunatic poor. Chelsea Hospital was founded by Charles II., as an infirmary for sick and disabled soldiers; and twelve years later Greenwich Hospital, which was to afford a similar blessing to sailors, was projected.

It were impossible to review in the limits of one article even the classes into which hospitals are now divided. There are hospitals enough almost for the wants of the metropolis—hospitals for general purposes, and hospitals for the treatment and study of special diseases only. Some of them are richly endowed, as Guy's, St. Thomas's, Bethlehem; but most of them depend for the chief portion of their incomes upon the voluntary contributions of the public. There are over ninety hospitals of various kinds in the metropolis alone, of which nearly the entire income is spent for the benefit of patients, the charges for officers' salaries being reduced to a minimum, and the cost for the best and amplest medical attendance being almost nominal; indeed, the best and most valuable is given quite gratuitously.

POLYGALA.

MARY," said Emily, "we have just found a beautiful little plant growing among the grass, and we want you to tell us what it is called."

"Here is a bit which I gathered to show you," said Charles. "See, it has bright blue blossoms, and the green leaves are very pretty also."

"Yes," added Emily, "just like branches of fairy myrtle."

"It is called polygala, or milk-wort," replied Mary, "and is to be found chiefly in pasture land, where its blossoms during most of the summer form bright patches of purple, pink, or white; blue is the most common, but in my opinion, much the prettiest colour."

"Have you anything interesting to tell us about it?" asked Charles.

"Yes; the blue polygala always brings to my memory a farewell walk with my brother Frederick. He went abroad when I was quite a little child, and I recollect looking upon him as a stranger, and feeling

almost shy towards him on his return; but that soon passed away, and I grew to love him dearly. He used to take me long walks, and tell me of his adventures in other countries, and of all the wonderful things he had seen, until I thought no book of travels could be half so amusing as Frederick's stories. You may imagine, then, my grief and disappointment when I was told he must again leave home and resume his life of hardship and hazard, far from all his friends. Time flew quickly by (as it always does in our happy seasons) until it came to the day previous to my dear brother's intended departure, and he asked me to take a farewell walk. We visited all our favourite haunts, and wandered silently through woods and meadows, until Frederick spoke. 'I wonder shall I ever see these dear old places again.'

"These words caused me for the first time fully to realise the length of our separation, and the uncertainty of his return, and I felt unable to reply; so we walked on, each occupied by our own sad thoughts, until we reached a pretty green slope near a small stream,

and then, feeling somewhat tired, we sat down. There was a quantity of blue polygala growing around. You may be sure I was not thinking much of its beauty, for my mind was entirely filled with the idea of parting from my brother so soon; yet, unconsciously, I gathered spray after spray until my lap was covered with the bright blue blossoms and tiny myrtle-like leaves.

"Frederick said, probably to divert my mind from the sad thoughts his former words had suggested, 'How pretty these flowers would look in your hat, Mary. Come, let us make a wreath.'

"I gave him my hat, round which he tastefully twined the polygala, while I watched him sadly. 'Oh! Frederick,' I said, 'those flowers will always remind me of you.'

"They will soon wither, little sister," he replied. "I hope your recollections of me will not fade so soon."

"No, Frederick, they nevershall; I have now learned to love you so dearly that I cannot forget you, no matter how long you may be away; but won't you promise to write to me often?"

"I shall be sure to do so whenever it is possible; and won't you write me a great many letters, Mary, and tell me all the home news? You do not know what a pleasure it is to hear from friends when one is far away and separated from them all. So remember how anxiously I shall watch for your letters."

Conversing in this way, we walked slowly and sadly home. The next morning came, and Frederick departed. It was a trying day to us all, for there was such a lonely, desolate feeling about the whole house; but we endeavoured as best we could to keep up for each other's sake.

"When the hour came at which Frederick had been in the habit of taking me to walk, I felt so sad, and had such a desire to be alone, in order to indulge my grief unrestrainedly, that I rushed to my own room and shut the door. The only thing which gave me any comfort was to take the withered wreath of polygala from my hat and place it carefully in water. 'It shall not fade,' I exclaimed, 'and neither shall my recollections of him.'

"As soon as the little sprays had sufficiently revived, I put them to press in blotting-paper; and in a few days, when properly dried, arranged them as a wreath on the blank page of a book, which had been the parting gift of dear Frederick, and wrote under them: 'Memorial flowers.'

"By degrees time, that great soother, wore away the intensity of my grief. We had received pleasant letters from my brother by every mail, and I had written him several in return. A year passed on, and I found my thoughts less frequently reverting to Frederick; my letters also became shorter and not so regular. It was not that I did not love him as well as ever, but I felt a greater difficulty in finding subjects on which to write, now that so long a time had elapsed since we had parted. He certainly con-

tinued to write me long and amusing letters; then, of course, he had a great deal to tell which I had not. In this way I made excuses to myself for my negligence, while in reality I was growing selfishly indolent, and felt it a trouble to keep up so constant a correspondence. One morning I entered the drawing-room, and found my mother lying on the sofa.

"'Mary,' she said, 'this is the day the mail goes out, and your father is writing to Frederick; I am sorry I cannot do so this time, for I have a very bad headache; so I hope you will sit down and give him a pleasant letter.'

"But, mamma, I cannot to-day, for I promised to go with some of my friends to the lake, to see skating. You know these are the Christmas holidays, and really I cannot take up my time writing; I might as well be at school."

"But think of Frederick, how disappointed he will be! and how unkind it will seem if your father's letter goes off without a line from either you or me. Could you not write before you go out?"

"No, mamma, I must go early, or not at all; but even suppose I did give up my day's pleasure and stay at home to write to Frederick, I have nothing to say; he meets so many wonderful adventures, that he would think very little of my stupid news; and everything is so much the same here, we have no great events worth mentioning in a letter which is to go so far away. I really think he may do very well this time, without hearing from me. Papa will tell him we are well, and, after all, that will be the most interesting intelligence to him."

"Well, my dear, take your own way," said my mother, laying her head wearily down on the pillow, "but I fear Frederick will feel your neglect."

I hastened out, to prove to my mother that I had no time to spare for writing; but in reality I went much sooner than was necessary, and was obliged to wait nearly an hour before I was joined by my young friends. We had a pleasant day, spent in watching the skaters, admiring some who skimmed lightly and gracefully along, and laughing at the awkwardness of others.

"Still, amidst all the amusement, the thought would recur to my mind, I wish I had written to Frederick by this mail; but it's too late now, I can't help it, and there's no use fretting.

"Yes, truly it was too late: that day had passed, never to be recalled. Oh! what would I not give, even now, that I could bring it back; for my father's letter was the last he ever received.

"I was very particular, next mail, to write to my brother. I recounted every minute piece of news which I thought could interest him, and mentioned how frequently I looked at the polygala wreath, and how it brought our last walk to my memory. After this, my mind was much more at ease, for I considered my former neglect quite repaired. Alas! no, it is easier to wound than to heal; easier to

first of the modern hospitals, was built in 1724, with money left for the purpose by Thomas Guy, the son of a Thames lighterman. Guy was left an orphan when he was eight years old, and when he was sixteen he was apprenticed to a bookseller in Cheapside. In 1668 he set up for himself in a small place at the corner of Cornhill and Lombard Street. There he sold, at a good profit, Bibles printed in Holland, and afterwards in London, with Dutch types, first entering into competition with the king's printer, who had a monopoly, and then selling by arrangement with that worthy. Guy grew rich by his business, and then the South-Sea scheme being in the ascendant, in 1720 he bought shares in the company, and sold them again, as the South-Sea furore rose, at a profit of 400 and 500 per cent. Out of this fortune he bought the land for an hospital, which still bears his name, and which he endowed with £220,000. Before this, St. Thomas's and St. Bartholomew's—the latter is almost coeval with English history—were the only great hospitals in London, but after Thomas Guy's magnificent bequest to the sick and needy, other men followed the example, and the Westminster Hospital (built on the ground once occupied by the Sanctuary), the Middlesex, St. George's, the London Hospital, the Lock, the Magdalen, and several more rose in quick succession.

The Foundling Hospital was established in 1739, by Captain Coram, of the merchant service, for the better care and protection of deserted children, of whom many in his day were left about the streets, or at the door-step of those whom the wretched

mothers supposed would have pity upon the poor children. The mortality among infants was shockingly high, and it seemed as if no amount of exhortation, no amount of shame, would check the tendency of certain fathers and mothers to desert their offspring. Captain Coram having a pitiful heart, built his house of refuge in Guilford Street, where it now stands.

Christ's Hospital was founded by Edward VI., for the education and maintenance of orphans, and of the sons of parents with limited means. Bethlehem Hospital, also founded by Edward VI., was for the reception of the lunatic poor. Chelsea Hospital was founded by Charles II., as an infirmary for sick and disabled soldiers; and twelve years later Greenwich Hospital, which was to afford a similar blessing to sailors, was projected.

It were impossible to review in the limits of one article even the classes into which hospitals are now divided. There are hospitals enough almost for the wants of the metropolis—hospitals for general purposes, and hospitals for the treatment and study of special diseases only. Some of them are richly endowed, as Guy's, St. Thomas's, Bethlehem; but most of them depend for the chief portion of their incomes upon the voluntary contributions of the public. There are over ninety hospitals of various kinds in the metropolis alone, of which nearly the entire income is spent for the benefit of patients, the charges for officers' salaries being reduced to a minimum, and the cost for the best and amplest medical attendance being almost nominal; indeed, the best and most valuable is given quite gratuitously.

POLYGALA.

"**MARY,**" said Emily, "we have just found a beautiful little plant growing among the grass, and we want you to tell us what it is called."

"Here is a bit which I gathered to show you," said Charles. "See, it has bright blue blossoms, and the green leaves are very pretty also."

"Yes," added Emily, "just like branches of fairy myrtle."

"It is called polygala, or milk-wort," replied Mary, "and is to be found chiefly in pasture land, where its blossoms during most of the summer form bright patches of purple, pink, or white; blue is the most common, but in my opinion, much the prettiest colour."

"Have you anything interesting to tell us about it?" asked Charles.

"Yes; the blue polygala always brings to my memory a farewell walk with my brother Frederick. He went abroad when I was quite a little child, and I recollect looking upon him as a stranger, and feeling

almost shy towards him on his return; but that soon passed away, and I grew to love him dearly. He used to take me long walks, and tell me of his adventures in other countries, and of all the wonderful things he had seen, until I thought no book of travels could be half so amusing as Frederick's stories. You may imagine, then, my grief and disappointment when I was told he must again leave home and resume his life of hardship and hazard, far from all his friends. Time flew quickly by (as it always does in our happy seasons) until it came to the day previous to my dear brother's intended departure, and he asked me to take a farewell walk. We visited all our favourite haunts, and wandered silently through woods and meadows, until Frederick spoke. 'I wonder shall I ever see these dear old places again.'

"These words caused me for the first time fully to realise the length of our separation, and the uncertainty of his return, and I felt unable to reply; so we walked on, each occupied by our own sad thoughts, until we reached a pretty green slope near a small stream,

and then, feeling somewhat tired, we sat down. There was a quantity of blue polygala growing around. You may be sure I was not thinking much of its beauty, for my mind was entirely filled with the idea of parting from my brother so soon; yet, unconsciously, I gathered spray after spray until my lap was covered with the bright blue blossoms and tiny myrtle-like leaves.

"Frederick said, probably to divert my mind from the sad thoughts his former words had suggested, 'How pretty these flowers would look in your hat, Mary. Come, let us make a wreath.'"

"I gave him my hat, round which he tastefully twined the polygala, while I watched him sadly. "Oh! Frederick," I said, "those flowers will always remind me of you."

"They will soon wither, little sister," he replied. "I hope your recollections of me will not fade so soon."

"No, Frederick, they never shall; I have now learned to love you so dearly that I cannot forget you, no matter how long you may be away; but won't you promise to write to me often?"

"I shall be sure to do so whenever it is possible; and won't you write me a great many letters, Mary, and tell me all the home news? You do not know what a pleasure it is to hear from friends when one is far away and separated from them all. So remember how anxiously I shall watch for your letters."

Conversing in this way, we walked slowly and sadly home. The next morning came, and Frederick departed. It was a trying day to us all, for there was such a lonely, desolate feeling about the whole house; but we endeavoured as best we could to keep up for each other's sake.

"When the hour came at which Frederick had been in the habit of taking me to walk, I felt so sad, and had such a desire to be alone, in order to indulge my grief unrestrainedly, that I rushed to my own room and shut the door. The only thing which gave me any comfort was to take the withered wreath of polygala from my hat and place it carefully in water. 'It shall not fade,' I exclaimed, 'and neither shall my recollections of him.'

"As soon as the little sprays had sufficiently revived, I put them to press in blotting-paper; and in a few days, when properly dried, arranged them as a wreath on the blank page of a book, which had been the parting gift of dear Frederick, and wrote under them: 'Memorial flowers.'

"By degrees time, that great soother, wore away the intensity of my grief. We had received pleasant letters from my brother by every mail, and I had written him several in return. A year passed on, and I found my thoughts less frequently reverting to Frederick; my letters also became shorter and not so regular. It was not that I did not love him as well as ever, but I felt a greater difficulty in finding subjects on which to write, now that so long a time had elapsed since we had parted. He certainly con-

tinued to write me long and amusing letters; then, of course, he had a great deal to tell which I had not. In this way I made excuses to myself for my negligence, while in reality I was growing selfishly indolent, and felt it a trouble to keep up so constant a correspondence. One morning I entered the drawing-room, and found my mother lying on the sofa.

"'Mary,' she said, 'this is the day the mail goes out, and your father is writing to Frederick; I am sorry I cannot do so this time, for I have a very bad headache; so I hope you will sit down and give him a pleasant letter.'

"'But, mamma, I cannot to-day, for I promised to go with some of my friends to the lake, to see skating. You know these are the Christmas holidays, and really I cannot take up my time writing; I might as well be at school.'

"'But think of Frederick, how disappointed he will be! and how unkind it will seem if your father's letter goes off without a line from either you or me. Could you not write before you go out?'

"'No, mamma, I must go early, or not at all; but even suppose I did give up my day's pleasure and stay at home to write to Frederick, I have nothing to say; he meets so many wonderful adventures, that he would think very little of my stupid news; and everything is so much the same here, we have no great events worth mentioning in a letter which is to go so far away. I really think he may do very well this time, without hearing from me. Papa will tell him we are well, and, after all, that will be the most interesting intelligence to him.'

"'Well, my dear, take your own way,' said my mother, laying her head wearily down on the pillow, 'but I fear Frederick will feel your neglect.'

"I hastened out, to prove to my mother that I had no time to spare for writing; but in reality I went much sooner than was necessary, and was obliged to wait nearly an hour before I was joined by my young friends. We had a pleasant day, spent in watching the skaters, admiring some who skimmed lightly and gracefully along, and laughing at the awkwardness of others.

"Still, amidst all the amusement, the thought would recur to my mind, I wish I had written to Frederick by this mail; but it's too late now, I can't help it, and there's no use fretting.

"Yes, truly it was too late: that day had passed, never to be recalled. Oh! what would I not give, even now, that I could bring it back; for my father's letter was the last he ever received.

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commit what we may suppose a trivial error, than to prevent the evil effects which it may produce.

"Several months passed away, and we did not again hear from Frederick. He was usually a regular and agreeable correspondent, which made his silence the more surprising; yet we did not feel uneasy at first, thinking his letters might have gone astray, or that he was unable to have them sent to the post-office in time. So in this way we comforted ourselves; but when a longer period elapsed, and still brought no tidings of Frederick, we grew seriously unhappy, and watched for the arrival of the mails with intense anxiety.

"We continued to write regularly, until at length all our letters were returned, and we concluded he must have left the place to which we had been accustomed to direct. This idea gave us a little comfort, as we now supposed he was travelling from place to place, and waiting to be permanently settled before letting us know his new address; but this hope faded away also, as time passed on, and it was not realised. Then followed long, weary months of suspense, during which my father wrote to every one at all likely to give a clue to where Frederick might be found. After many fruitless inquiries, he succeeded in tracing his progress from his former residence to the house of a farmer at a considerable distance. Immediately he wrote to this man, and, after some months, received a reply which confirmed our worst apprehensions.

"About two years ago, he said, a young man had come to his house, who complained of feeling tired and ill, and asked to be allowed to rest before continuing his journey. During the time he remained there, he commenced a letter to his friends, but before it was finished he became suddenly so ill, that he was unable to speak in a connected or intelligible manner; and though immediate medical advice was procured, and everything done which was possible under the circumstances, yet he grew worse,

and at the end of a few days breathed his last, without giving any particulars of his former history, or mentioning the address of his relatives. All, therefore that the farmer could do was to preserve carefully the half-finished letter as an identification, hoping that in time his family would make inquiries. He also told the circumstances of the young man's death to every traveller who passed that way. The letter was now inclosed to my father, to whom it was commenced, and the handwriting was undoubtedly Frederick's. It was dated from the farmer's house, where he said he had turned in to rest for a day or two, feeling tired and not very well; he then mentioned his present plans, and reasons for having left his former position, and spoke of his father's last letter, which he had received just before starting on his journey. 'I was sorry to hear my mother was not well enough to write. She is a very good and kind correspondent; but my little sister—I own I was disappointed at not hearing from her. Could she not spare time for a few lines to her absent brother? I fear I am fading from her recollection, like the flowers we gathered before I left home.'

"Oh, that sentence! how it went to my heart! How i haunted me! It was like a voice from the grave; for with this impression of me he had died, though my next letter, had he ever received it, would have set all right; and thus the consequences of my selfish idleness on that one day can never, never be repaired. Many years have since passed, and yet I cannot think of these circumstances without the deepest sorrow. I have received a very severe lesson through life, not to allow my own selfish amusements or pleasures to interfere with anything which may gratify those I love."

"Oh, Mary, that is a very sad story," said Emily, "and I shall never see the blue polygala, without thinking of it."

"And," added Mary, "I hope you will also remember the lesson it taught me."

THE BIRD AND THE CAT.

 WHAT makes the swimming eyes so red,
And wets the rosy cheek,
And grieves my little boy that he
Can scarce for sobbing speak?"

"Papa, my little lark has flown,
I hear him in the sky;
I cannot live without my bird,
Oh! whither did he fly?"

"It was a good escape, methinks,"
The father quick replies;
"For see where pussy crouching sits,
With disappointed eyes.

"And glad I am that for your grief
There is no greater cause,

Far worse to see your birdie bleed
Within her greedy paws.

"'Twas so when little Annie went,
I could not guess or see
How sore time might have wounded her,
Had she been left with me.

"But now I would not have her back,
Since God has willed it so;
'Twas his own hand unlocked the cage,
And let my birdie go.

"She knows a happier, merrier song
Than e'er to lark was given;

Your bird sings only in the clouds,
But Annie sings in heaven."

S. A. T.